

HUNTERS POINT NAVAL SHIPYARD,  
COMMERCIAL DRYDOCK AREA, BUILDING 204  
East of the intersection of Robinson Avenue & Fischer Drive  
San Francisco  
San Francisco County  
California

HAER NO. CA-2273-B

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
San Francisco, California 97104

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## History:

For a detailed history of Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, Commercial Drydock Area, please refer to **HAER No. CA-2273**.

The San Francisco Dry Dock Company, successor of California Dry Dock Company, owned and operated the original Drydock 1 at Hunters Point at the turn of the twentieth century. Since construction of that original drydock at Hunters Point in 1868, ships had increased in size. In order to accommodate the larger commercial ships, San Francisco Dry Dock Company decided to construct a new, larger drydock at its site. The company offered well-established engineer Howard C. Holmes a position as chief engineer to design the new drydock, pumping house, and gate house, which he accepted, resigning his post as chief engineer of the California State Board of Harbor Commissioners.<sup>1</sup>

Once Holmes had prepared plans and specifications for the new drydock, pumping house, and gate house, San Francisco Dry Dock Company opened construction bids late in October 1900 and awarded the contract to the City Street Improvement Company. Work began on January 9, 1901 and on February 1, 1903, the first vessel drydocked.<sup>2</sup>

A site plan prepared by Holmes in 1903 shows Building 204, referred to as the “Gate House,” in the same location as an existing building associated with Drydock 1, likely also a gatehouse. A photograph dated 1903, after construction of Building 205, shows the old building, a small wood-paneled, gable-roof structure (See **HAER No. 2273, Photograph 8**). Building 204 then appears in a photograph dated 1904 (See **HAER No. 2273, Photograph 9**). When Holmes designed plans for Drydock 2, he designed a new building, complementary to Building 205, to house the existing machinery. The “Gate House” operated a valve in a U-shaped tunnel underneath the Gate House, on either side of the Drydock 1 caisson. Upon opening a valve in the tunnel, water flooded the drydock, allowing the caisson to float out without capsizing.<sup>3</sup>

When Bethlehem Shipbuilding (site owners from 1907 – 1939) eliminated Drydock 1 in 1916 to make room for construction of Drydock 3, Building 204 lost its original function as a gate house. The tunnel extending from the bay under the building was cut off and the section exiting the gatehouse toward the drydock was extended to intersect with the tunnel connecting the two drydocks (**Photograph 12**). Holmes’ 1916 specifications for Drydock 3 transformed Building

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<sup>1</sup> “Four Wharves to Cost Nearly Half a Million,” *San Francisco Call*, October 11, 1900, 12; “Ready to Begin the Construction of a Drydock of Gigantic Size,” *San Francisco Call*, November 18, 1900, 23; “Chief Engineer Holmes Resigns His Position,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 21, 1901, 12.

<sup>2</sup> Howard C. Holmes, *Plan Showing Location of Old and New Dry Docks at Hunters Point San Francisco Cal, Property of San Francisco Dry Dock Co*, 1903, Water Resources Center Archives, Berkeley, Charles Derleth Papers, Box 18, Folder 96.

<sup>3</sup> Holmes, *Plan, Hunters Point*, 1903; *Photograph*, 1903, Box: 11, Folder: Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, Drydocks, Photographs, Multiple Dates, RG 181, NARA (San Bruno); *USS Ohio in dry dock at Hunter’s Point, San Francisco, Calif., 19 July 1904*, Photo no. NH 60224, available at [www.history.navy.mil/](http://www.history.navy.mil/), accessed on July 21, 2009.

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204 into a salt water pump house, equipped with one high pressure salt water pump to accommodate washing down and testing purposes.<sup>4</sup>

In the late 1930s, the Navy took interest in acquiring Hunters Point in response to war in Europe and the Pacific. A congressional act in 1939 allowed Bethlehem Shipbuilding to sell Hunters Point to the Navy and in December 1941, after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Navy moved onto the site. The Navy continued to use Building 204 as a salt water pump house for the purpose of fire control. The arrangement of the equipment on both the interior and exterior of the building has remained virtually unchanged since 1945; however the Navy continued to repair or update this building's equipment throughout its operation of the site.<sup>5</sup>

After World War II the Hunters Point facility continued to serve as a docking area for Navy ships for repair, overhaul, maintenance and conversion. In 1974, the Navy deactivated the shipyard and leased the facility to private industry; however, the Navy continued to station several of its ships at Hunters Point. In 1991, the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission identified Hunters Point for closure. Over the next decade, the Navy and City and County of San Francisco negotiated terms for the lease and subsequent transfer of the facility.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Howard C. Holmes, *Specifications for a Concrete Graving Dock for the Union Iron Works, Hunters Point, San Francisco*, 1916, M.M. O'Shaughnessy Papers, Subseries 1.3, Carton 10, Folder 22, Bancroft Library, 33.

<sup>5</sup> "History of Bethlehem's San Francisco Yard, 1849-1949," *Pacific Marine Review* (October 1949), 27-34, 88; *Salt Water Pump House, Bldg. No. 204, New Pump & Piping, April 7, 1945*, Naval Drydocks, Hunters Point, P.W. Drawing No. 111192; *Salt Water Pump House - Bldg. 204, General Arrangement, June 15, 1945*, US Naval Drydocks, Hunters Point, P.W. Drawing No. 112669; *Weekly Report of Public Works Projects, November 14, 1945, November 19, 1945, August 20, 1946*, Folder: A1-4 Public Works, Box 1, Hunters Point General Correspondence, RG 181, NARA (San Bruno); *Weekly Report of Public Works Project, October 3, 1947*, Folder: A1-4 Public Works, vol. II, Box 1, Hunters Point General Correspondence, RG 181, NARA (San Bruno).

<sup>6</sup> JRP Historical Consulting Services, *Historic Context and Inventory and Evaluation of Buildings and Structures, Hunters Point Shipyard, San Francisco*, September 1997, 27-28; "San Francisco Naval Shipyard in Permanent Status," *Pacific Marine Review* (June 1947), 63-65, 120; Bonnie L. Bamburg, *Historical Overview of Hunters Point Annex Treasure Island Naval Base and Descriptions of Properties that Appear Eligible for Listing in the National Register of Historic Places*, Submitted to Western Division, Naval Facilities, Engineering Division, 1988, 44-45; Steven R. Black, *Mare Island Naval Shipyard, Historic American Engineering Record for Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, Drydock No. 4, HAER No. CA-181-A*, (April 1994) 11-12.

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Holmes, Howard C. "Plan Showing Location of Old and New Dry Docks at Hunters Point San Francisco Cal, Property of San Francisco Dry Dock Co, 1903." Water Resources Center Archives, Berkeley, Charles Derleth Papers, Box 18, Folder 96.

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JRP Historical Consulting Services. "Historic Context and Inventory and Evaluation of Buildings and Structures, Hunters Point Shipyard, San Francisco." September 1997.

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\_\_\_\_\_. "Valves and Piping, Salt Water Pump House Bldg. 204." P.W. Drawing No. 114663. San Francisco, September 29, 1942. BRAC PMO West Caretaker Site Office, Yerba Buena Island.

Naval History and Heritage Command. "USS Ohio in dry dock at Hunter's Point, San Francisco, Calif." 19 July 1904, Photo no. NH 60224, available at [www.history.navy.mil/](http://www.history.navy.mil/), accessed July 21, 2009.

*Pacific Marine Review*

"San Francisco Naval Shipyard in Permanent Status," (June 1947): 63-65.

"History of Bethlehem's San Francisco Yard, 1849-1949," (October 1949), 27-34, 88.

*Photograph*, 1903. National Archives and Records Administration (San Francisco), RG 181, Records of Naval District and Shore Establishments, 12<sup>th</sup> Naval District, SF Naval Shipyard – Hunters Point, Historical Shipyard Photographic Collection, 1904-74. 9NS-S 181-95-010, Box 11, Folder: Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, Drydocks, Photographs, Multiple Dates.

*San Francisco Call*

*San Francisco Chronicle*

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U.S. Department of the Navy. "Salt Water Pump House – Bldg. 204, General Arrangement, US Naval Drydocks, Hunters Point." P.W. Drawing No. 112669, San Francisco, June 15, 1945. BRAC PMO West Caretaker Site Office, Yerba Buena Island.

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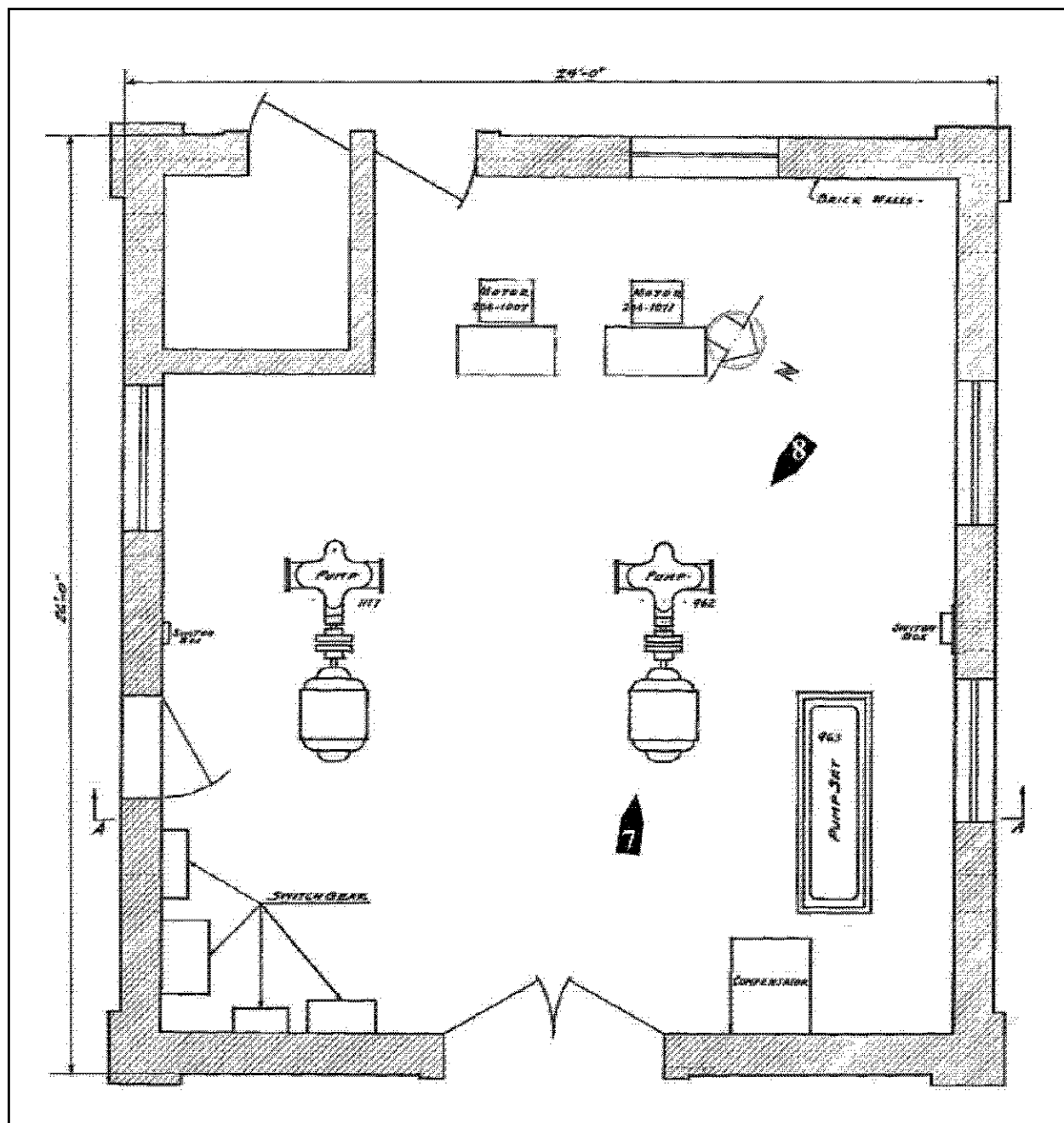
**Project Information:** This project was undertaken to fulfill the requirements of the *Memorandum of Agreement Among The United States Navy, The Advisory Council for Historic Preservation and The California State Historic Preservation Officer Regarding the Interim Leasing and Disposal of Historic Properties on the Former Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, San Francisco, California.* Heather Norby and Toni Webb of JRP Historical Consulting, LLC (JRP) prepared this document for the Navy. Both Ms. Norby and Ms. Webb conducted fieldwork, contributed to architectural descriptions and the historic context. JRP conducted research at the California State Library, Hunters Point Naval Shipyard (Building 383), National Archives and Records Administration (San Bruno), San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park Library, and the BRAC PMO West Caretaker Site Office on Treasure Island. William B. Dewey produced the photography.

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**SITE MAP:**



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NOTE: Photographic key based on 1945 plan of building; not all equipment shown is currently extant.